

## Document Citation

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# The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN SCHEDULE FOR

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, AT 2:00 and 5:30 p.m.

The Department of Film sincerely regrets that due to circumstances beyond its control, it had to cancel the screening of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Mr. Kubrick is aware of the cancellation of his film and is also distressed and concerned. Mr. Kubrick has no control over the distribution and exhibition of his films.

In lieu of the screening of 2001, Mr. Kubrick suggested that we show a film by one of the great artists of the film medium, a director whom he admires and whose work has influenced Mr. Kubrick's own development - the late Max Ophuls.

In the program note for PATHS OF GLORY, Michael Kerbel wrote, "PATHS OF GLORY contains the most obvious illustration of what critics have discerned in all of Kubrick's work - the sense of a pre-determined design, from which deviation is impossible...it is conveyed most dramatically through Kubrick's repeated use of tracking shots. In this, he shows his admiration for Ophuls, as in his previous film, THE KILLING, he did for Welles...Kubrick hardly shares Ophuls' romanticism, but like Ophuls, he uses a moving camera to confine his protagonists in an inescapable, fated progression..."

Kubrick, himself, has said, "I don't think that Ophuls ever received the critical appreciation he deserved for films like LE PLAISIR, THE EARRINGS of MADAME DE...., and LA RONDE. When I went to Munich in 1957 to make PATHS OF GLORY at the Geiselsegg Studios, I found the last sad remnants of the great filmmaker - the dilapidated, cracked, and peeling sets that Ophuls had used on what would prove to be his last film, LOLA MONTES."

-- from Stanley Kubrick Directs, by Alexander Walker.

Thanks to the cooperation and permission of Contemporary/McGraw-Hill Films, the Department of Film has substituted THE EARRINGS OF MADAME DE...., by Max Ophuls. 1953. With Charles Boyer, Danielle Darrieux, Vittorio de Sica. French with English titles. ca. 96 minutes.

In gratitude to Michael Kerbel, and for the benefit of the audience, we have also printed the program note for Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY.



2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. 1968. Produced and Directed by Stanley Kubrick for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C. Clarke, based on the latter's short story, "The Sentinel." Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth. Screen process: Super Panavision, presented in Cinerama. Color by Metrocolor. Additional Photography: John Alcott. Special Photographic Effects Designer and Director: Stanley Kubrick. Editor: Ray Lovejoy. Production Designers: Tony Masters, Harry Lange, Ernie Archer. Art Director: John Hoesli. Special Photographic Effects Supervisors: Wally Veevers, Douglas Trumbull, Con Pederson, Tom Howard. Music: Richard Strauss, Johann Strauss, Aram Khachaturian, Gyorgy Ligeti. Costumes: Hardy Amies. Sound: Winston Ryder.

Cast: Keir Dullea (David Bowman), Garry Lockwood (Frank Poole), William Sylvester (Dr. Heywood Floyd), Daniel Richter (Moonwatcher), Douglas Rain (Voice of HAL 9000), Leonard Rossiter (Smyslov), Margaret Tyzack (Elena), Robert Beatty (Halvorsen), Sean Sullivan (Michaels), Frank Miller (Mission Control), Penny Brahms (Stewardess), Alan Gifford (Poole's Father), Edward Bishop, Glenn Beck, Edwina Carroll, Mike Lovell, Peter Delman, Dany Grover, Brian Hawley. 141 minutes.\*

\*The original running time of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, when previewed on April 1, 1968, in New York was 161 minutes. Kubrick himself subsequently took the decision to trim about twenty minutes. He commented: "It does take a few runnings to decide finally how long things should be, especially scenes which do not have narrative advancement as their guideline."

"2001 is a nonverbal experience; out of two hours and 19 minutes of film, there are only a little less than 40 minutes of dialogue. I tried to create a visual experience, one that bypasses verbal pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content...I think that if 2001 succeeds at all, it is in reaching a wide spectrum of people who would not often give a thought to man's destiny, his role in the cosmos and his relationship to higher forms of life."

-- Stanley Kubrick, interviewed in Playboy.

"The God concept is at the heart of the film. It's unavoidable that it would be, once you believe that the universe is seething with advanced forms of intelligent life... At a time when man's distant evolutionary ancestors were just crawling out of the primordial ooze, there must have been civilizations in the universe sending out their starships to explore the farthest reaches of the cosmos and conquering all the secrets of nature. Such cosmic intelligences, growing in knowledge over the aeons, would be as far removed from man as we are from the ants...the religious implications are inevitable, because all the essential attributes of such extraterrestrial intelligences are the attributes we give to God...And if these beings of pure intelligence ever did intervene in the affairs of man, we could only understand it in terms of God or magic, so far removed would their powers be from our own understanding."

-- Stanley Kubrick, interviewed by Joseph Gelmis, The Film Director as Superstar.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY is Kubrick's most ambitious film: he spent over four years on it, including a year with Arthur C. Clarke writing the script, six months on pre-production work, four-and-a-half months filming with actors, and a year-and-a-half filming the 205 special-effect shots. The budget rose from \$6 million to \$10.5 million, largely because of the special equipment required, including the \$750,000



centrifuge built for the Discovery sequences. The result is Kubrick's most profound and moving work, probably one of the most significant films of all time. Certainly few films have provoked such a wide range of opinion, from bitter antagonism to almost religious enthusiasm. At first it was attacked both by prominent critics, who thought it incoherent and pretentious, and by average viewers, who found it confusing. But the film quickly built up a following, among perceptive critics who recognized it as a milestone, and especially among new, young audiences, who saw 2001 as a kinetic, sensory experience, an "ultimate trip."

Even the film's opponents would admit that Kubrick's special effects (for which 2001 won its only Academy Award) are extraordinary and, more importantly, that he attempted at least to take the big-budget, wide-screen spectacle into a new dimension. Kubrick's innovation was not that he made an ambiguous film, but that he dared to make a reserved-seat Cinerama attraction ambiguous. He utilized the epic genre to make an essentially metaphysical, extremely personal statement, and thus destroyed the standard way of viewing such an entertainment. Kubrick expected audiences unaccustomed to European and underground cinema to accept a film that discarded conventional ideas of plot and character; and he asked critics to understand that this kind of approach was not the exclusive province of Antonioni or Fellini.

The extent of the controversy surrounding 2001 can best be seen in the erratic but invaluable collection, The Making of Kubrick's 2001 (Signet), edited by Jerome Agel. That such an unprecedented book even exists attests to the film's uniqueness. Included among an assortment of negative and positive reviews are four pieces that can serve as excellent starting points for anyone pursuing interpretations. Perhaps the diversity of sources alone indicates the film's wide appeal: The New Yorker (Penelope Gilliatt), The Harvard Crimson (Tim Hunter), The Christian Science Monitor (John Allen), and a 15-year-old high school student whose comments Kubrick regards as "perhaps the most intelligent I've read anywhere." Another way to approach the film is through Clarke's equally unprecedented novel, 2001. Kubrick and Clarke developed the novel prior to the script, and it differs significantly with the finished film. It is much more explicit, for example, about the meanings of both the monolith and the ending. However, the novel is interesting not only for its explanations, but for what these imply about Kubrick's methods in making the film; namely, his deliberate decision to eliminate all specific interpretations, in order to keep 2001 as ambiguous as possible.

In many ways, 2001 is unlike any of Kubrick's previous works. Certainly the best of them - THE KILLING, PATHS OF GLORY and DR. STRANGELOVE - are characterized by almost everything 2001 avoids. They are tightly structured and rapidly paced, and their action occurs over a brief period of time: 2001 covers four million years, the largest expanse of time ever depicted in one film (a fact which Kubrick underlines boldly with his direct cut from the prehistoric bone-weapon to the spacecraft of 2001 A.D.); moreover, the pace is quite leisurely. Another difference is that these three earlier films depend heavily on suspense. 2001 is at the opposite extreme: except for one important instance, the scene in which the astronauts conspire against HAL, there is a deliberate avoidance of suspense. To use Hitchcock's distinction, 2001 has the element of surprise. Throughout the film, we get almost no information about what is going on, and the most important facts - the purpose of the Jupiter mission - are withheld from the audience (and the protagonists) until near the end, when it no longer matters.

It is characteristic of 2001 that this first statement containing concrete information is also the last dialogue in the film. As Kubrick indicates, he attempted to convey almost everything in 2001 through images. In his previous films, particularly STRANGELOVE, dialogue was important in creating humor and importing information. 2001 has



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only 40 minutes of dialogue, none at all in the first half hour, and most of the words in the film are deliberately uninformative. Every other Kubrick film utilizes narration at one point or another, through either a first-person narrator (KILLER'S KISS, LOLITA, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE) or an impartial voice of authority (FEAR AND DESIRE, THE KILLING, PATHS OF GLORY, SPARTACUS, STRANGELOVE). Originally, 2001 was to have had narration (Agel's book is illuminating on this point); most of it was intended for the "Dawn of Man" sequences, and it explained, for example, the meaning behind the chilling scene in which the ape smashes the bones. Fortunately, Kubrick eliminated all narration, leaving the film less specific but unquestionably more powerful.

Despite these basic differences, however, 2001 grew directly out of concepts expressed in Kubrick's previous films. For example, it develops the idea of STRANGELOVE that men are becoming machines, by introducing a machine that becomes human. The dehumanization and lack of emotion in these two films, and in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, can be found also in Kubrick's earlier works (the loveless marriage in THE KILLING, the impossibility of emotional fulfillment in LOLITA, the mechanical way of viewing men's deaths in PATHS OF GLORY, and the essential absence of normal sexual relationships in all of his films). In 2001, when Bowman tries to save Poole, he merely goes through the motions, as if he were a robot, clearly devoid of feeling. The men show absolutely no warmth, but many human emotions are evident in HAL; and in the touching scene of his "death," we suddenly realize that we care more about him than we do about anyone in the film. 2001 also expresses a related idea, the general inability of human beings to communicate on any but the most banal level. Whatever dialogue exists is purposely made uninteresting - from the first spoken words (the stewardess's line, "Here you are, sir"), to the strained conversation with the Russians, to Floyd's innocuous speech, to the routine, mechanical exchanges on the Discovery. Kubrick is demonstrating how communication, like life, has become dull, matter-of-fact, formalized and emotionless.

In Kubrick's earlier films, there is generally a sense of fate; the characters seem to move inevitably according to a large, predetermined pattern, usually toward defeat. In 2001, fate is no longer implied: it is actually the central subject. Kubrick sees man as developing entirely from encounters with a mysterious force - an extraterrestrial intelligence that may be characterized as God. Embodied in the form of the monoliths, it seems to inspire man at crucial points in history to new levels of discovery. But man continually becomes dominated by his discoveries: the ape learns to use the bone as a tool, but quickly employs it to kill, thus giving birth to an entire civilization based on weaponry. Similarly, in the year 2001, man is allowing himself to become controlled by technology. Thus the basic situation of STRANGELOVE, man's dependence on machines, is seen in the context of its origin and future. Once again, man seems to be heading toward his self-made destruction; however, 2001 introduces an element of optimism. Although man seems incapable of improvement on his own, Kubrick envisions the possibility of another decisive intercession by fate, which transforms man into a new kind of being that can transcend the world and begin anew. And, as Kubrick previously expressed man's progression toward destiny by means of a recurring visual equivalent - the tracking shot - 2001 shows man's transcendence by the final track into the monolith, until its blackness fills the screen. All of Kubrick's tracking shots seem to be summed up in that extraordinary movement into what appears to be a mystery at the heart of the universe. Appropriately, this shot is accompanied by the opening notes of Strauss' "Thus Spake Zarathustra," celebrating the coming of the Superman.

-- Michael Kerbel.